Message

**From:** Jim Willett [redacted]
**Sent:** 3/16/2022 3:29:22 AM
**To:** 'JSG Senior ADM Public Security Division' [JSG.SeniorADMPublicSecurityDivision@gov.ab.ca]
**CC:** 'Ministry of Justice' [ministryofjustice@gov.ab.ca]
**Subject:** RE: Coutts Land Border Blockade

Thank you for your reply, but I question why you felt it necessary to send me a form letter. As I had a perspective from "behind the lines" as it were, and daily briefings from the RCMP, you'll be happy to know your statements agree with what I observed and was briefed on. My first contact with the Minister's Office regarding the impending blockade was on Thursday evening the 27th of January regarding the social media posts we had been seeing about a border blockade. Mr Pilgrim phoned me the morning of the 29th to assure me all police services had been notified and were "all over it". And they were, for 43 minutes on Saturday, as the RCMP escorted the convoy to Coutts and began returning them up the highway. Then the protest degenerated into a blockade, and we all had to play catch up for the ensuing hours. Anyway, I am wholeheartedly supportive of the police action and reaction, and we all have made a list of things we'll do differently, next time. I received nothing but cooperation from the police services and any time I voiced a concern it was handled expeditiously and professionally.

Again, thanks for the recap.

Jim L. Willett
Mayor
Village of Coutts
[redacted]

**From:** JSG Senior ADM Public Security Division <JSG.SeniorADMPublicSecurityDivision@gov.ab.ca>
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:49 PM
**To:** JSG Senior ADM Public Security Division <JSG.SeniorADMPublicSecurityDivision@gov.ab.ca>
**Cc:** Ministry of Justice <ministryofjustice@gov.ab.ca>
**Subject:** Coutts Land Border Blockade

Thank you for your email to the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General regarding the Coutts land border blockade. As the Director of Law Enforcement, and the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Public Security Division, I appreciate the opportunity to respond on the Minister's behalf and provide the following information.

On January 29, 2022, a group of protestors blocked north and southbound traffic near the Coutts land border crossing, demanding an end to all COVID-19 vaccinations and restrictions. The Honourable Jason Kenney, Premier of Alberta, has stated on many occasions that Canadians have the democratic right to engage in lawful protests and he has urged those involved in the protest to do so as safely as possible, and not to create road hazards, which could lead to accidents or unsafe conditions for other drivers. The constitutional rights to freedom of assembly and expression have reasonable limits. When protesters threaten public safety, disrupt the public peace, or prevent Albertans from accessing vital infrastructure, they open themselves up to potential action from law enforcement.

The Government of Alberta has a duty to ensure the administration of justice is upheld and public safety is maintained. In this system, police agencies are tasked with enforcing the law, and how that enforcement is operationalized is also a police agency responsibility. No elected official of the Government of Alberta has the mandate to direct police operations. A justice system free of political interference is essential to maintaining public confidence in the fairness and objectivity of both the political system and justice system.

The blockade of Highway 4 at the Coutts border crossing violated a number of laws, including the *Criminal Code*, the Alberta *Traffic Safety Act, and the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act*. It caused significant inconvenience for lawful motorists, stopped the free movement of goods and supplies vital for Alberta's economy, and could have dangerously impeded the movement of emergency service vehicles.

> Further, the *Critical Infrastructure Defence Act* provides additional mechanisms to remedy the obstruction, interruption, or interference with the use or operation of critical infrastructure. The offences and penalties in this *Act* were introduced by Alberta's government in 2020 to specifically address illegal activities that jeopardize the economy, public safety, and the transportation of essential goods.

I am pleased to note that actions taken by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), with close support from law enforcement partners and various ministries of the Government of Alberta, effectively dismantled the illegal Coutts border blockade on February 15, 2022, without serious incident. I would like to commend these organizations for doing an outstanding job in difficult circumstances.

> As you may now be aware, underlying public safety concerns had a significant influence on how this delicate policing operation unfolded. I trust that the complexity of the Coutts blockade will become increasingly evident in the coming weeks and months as public proceedings regarding enforcement actions taken in the Coutts area – including the laying of charges under the *Critical Infrastructure Defence Act* – progress through our courts.

Thank you for taking the time to write and share your concerns. I hope this information will be of assistance to you.

Sincerely,

M. A. (Marlin) Degrand, M.O.M.
Assistant Deputy Minister
Director of Law Enforcement

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